

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING MR. BOBBY SEALE

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 22, 2016

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Bobby Seale on the momentous occasion of his 80th birthday. Mr. Seale has had an incredible career in political activism and community service, dedicating his life to advocating for the rights and betterment of African-Americans across the nation.

Born in Texas in 1936, Mr. Seale grew up entrenched in poverty. After moving around in Texas, living in Dallas, San Antonio, and Port Arthur, Mr. Seale's family finally relocated to Oakland, California, when Mr. Seale was eight years old.

Mr. Seale attended Berkeley High School, where he started to become politically active. In 1955, Mr. Seale dropped out of high school and joined the United States Air Force. After his military service, Mr. Seale worked as a sheet metal mechanic while earning his high school diploma at night.

After earning his high school diploma, Mr. Seale went on to attend Merritt College, where he intended to study engineering. However, during his time at Merritt College, he began to take a deep interest in politics and black history, and joined the Afro-American Association (AAA), a campus group advocating for black separatism. It was through the AAA that Mr. Seale met Mr. Huey P. Newton, a kindred spirit. They quickly became friends and their political activism deepened as they were inspired by the teachings of Malcolm X.

During this time, Mr. Seale was also inspired to give back to his community, spending time teaching youths about black history and personal responsibility at the North Oakland Neighborhood Anti-Poverty Center.

By October 1966, Mr. Seale and Mr. Newton were ready to organize their beliefs and put them into practice, and they formed the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Originally formed to protect the African-American community in Oakland from police brutality, the Black Panthers rejected the nonviolent approach of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement. The Black Panthers also focused on serving the community, cooking free breakfast for children before school, distributing clothing, and teaching classes on politics and economics.

A few years later, in 1970, Mr. Seale was arrested in Chicago during a protest at the Democratic National Convention, and he was ultimately sentenced to four years in prison for contempt of court. After his release from prison in 1973, Mr. Seale renounced violence as a means to an end and decided to run for Mayor of Oakland. He finished second out of nine candidates.

In 1974, Mr. Seale resigned as Chairman of the Black Panther Party, having grown tired of politics. He has remained active in the community, writing books and working to improve

social services and educational opportunities in black neighborhoods.

On a personal note, I am deeply grateful for "the Chairman's" brilliance and leadership. He was a mentor, a colleague, but most importantly, a true friend. My late beloved mother, Ms. Mildred Massey, was one of Bobby's strongest supporters and believed in him and the Black Panther Party as the "vanguard of the movement." He taught us the importance of grassroots organizing by knocking on doors, walking precincts, and phone banking to communicate our position on issues and most importantly, how to be a true public servant.

Today, California's 13th Congressional District celebrates the extraordinary life and service of Mr. Bobby Seale and wishes him a very happy birthday and a life that continues to be filled with peace and happiness and fulfilled by the great work and leadership he continues to provide.

HONORING JUDGE GORDON
BARANCO

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 22, 2016

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary career of Judge Gordon Baranco. I would like to congratulate him on his retirement and thank him for his invaluable service to our community.

Born and raised in Oakland, California, Gordon graduated from Oakland High School in 1965. Gordon would become a star basketball player at the University of California, Davis, where he led the Aggies to win three league championships.

Gordon's time spent at UC Davis would coincide with the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement. This time in Gordon's life was critical to his academic and civic development, opening his eyes to injustices here in the United States and abroad.

In 1969, Gordon graduated from UC Davis with a bachelor's degree in political science. Inspired by the idea that the law could be a vehicle to change society, he went on to enroll in law school. He graduated from the King School of Law at UC Davis in 1972.

As an attorney, Gordon practiced as a Graduate Legal Assistant in the office of the California State Attorney General; a Deputy District Attorney in the office of the San Francisco District Attorney; as managing Attorney for the San Francisco Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation, and Assistant to the City Attorney in Oakland.

At the young age of 32 he was made the Honorable Gordon Baranco, appointed to the Oakland Piedmont Emeryville Municipal Court by Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. After serving as presiding judge of the court, he was appointed by Governor George Deukmejian as a judge of the Alameda County Superior Court.

In 2004, Judge Baranco was instrumental in establishing the Alameda County Homeless

and Caring Court, which provides a much needed alternative to the traditional criminal justice court system for the homeless.

On a personal note, Judge Baranco worked with me and helped lead our record remedy and expungement conferences for several years. Because of his boldness and commitment, many returning citizens have been able to move forward with their lives without the troubles of their past once their parole is completed. For this, I, along with so many others, am deeply grateful.

On behalf of the residents of California's 13th Congressional District, Judge Gordon Baranco, salute you. I thank you for a lifetime of service and congratulate you on your achievements. I wish you and your loved ones the very best as you enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

HONORING ZION FIRST CHURCH OF
GOD IN CHRIST

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 22, 2016

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Zion First Church of God in Christ located in Oakland, California upon its 100th anniversary as a strong religious pillar in the East Bay Community.

After moving to California from Louisiana, Zion First Church of God in Christ was founded in 1916 by Samuel Harrison and was the first Church of God in Christ in Northern California. It was created with the vision to expand the ministry and establish a legacy of spirituality through faith.

Under the leadership of Pastor Harrison, the church thrived and soon needed a building to accommodate its growing membership. In 1921, the church purchased its first building purchase in West Oakland and became a strong faith center for the West Oakland community. During the 1940's, as African Americans migrated to the West for industrial jobs, many families settled in West Oakland. Worship services immediately grew and were so inspirational it was said that people would hang out of their windows to see what was going on in the services.

On January 25, 1977 Pastor Willie E. Pearls was ushered in as the second leader of Zion First Church of God in Christ. Pastor Pearls had moved to California.

In 1978, Zion First upgraded its building to make room for its growing membership. Pastor Pearls moved to California in 1952 and joined Zion. First, serving for many years as a youth leader, Deacon, and a special helper to Overseer Harrison before accepting the role as senior pastor.

Pastor Pearls carried on the original vision of the church, helping the community, by giving away food, clothing the homeless, and serving hot breakfast every Sunday to the community.

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